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SCHOOLS -  
DUXBURY

## Duxbury Schools Named a GRAMMY Finalist

Music department in running for national award

By MORAG MACLACHLAN

History has repeated itself and Duxbury schools' music department couldn't be happier.

The GRAMMY Foundation has named Duxbury's music department a 2007 GRAMMY Signature Schools Finalist. The department was finalist during the 1998/1999 school year as well.

"It's recognition for our participation and high level programs," said Ric Madru, director of bands and music department chairman.

Joe Pondaco, music technology and band teacher, completed the department's online application in September. During this first round of judging, music departments from around the country were looked at based on statistics. The number of music classes offered, the number of students participating in music classes and extracurricular activities and the breadth of music electives were all investigated. Based on this criteria, Duxbury was chosen as one of 128 2007 GRAMMY Signature School Finalists and only one of three departments selected from Massachusetts.



Jim Donovan, DHS choir director; Marlana Johnson, a DHS senior clarinetist; and Jill Noerenberg, DHS band director, hope Duxbury's music department is chosen as the National GRAMMY Signature School.

"We have striking numbers," Madru said. "Ninety-one percent of students in the fifth grade play an instrument. At the high school, we have 360 performers out of 1,000 students enrolled in full time music classes. About 250 students take electives. That means 60 percent of our high school students are involved in music, which is well above the national average of 11 percent."

Students have a wide variety of classes to choose from and activities to belong to. Any student can be a member of the DHS concert band, according to Band Director Jill Noerenberg. Students must audition for the symphonic band. There is also the wind ensemble, the string ensemble, the concert orchestra, the concert chorus and

chamber singers. Electives at DHS run the gamut from music theory to piano lab. Jim Donovan, choir director, said the music technology class is so popular that seven sections of this elective are offered. This class allows students to compose music using keyboards. Other classes include music business, music appreciation and jazz rock improvisation.

Now that Duxbury's

DHS senior Marlana Johnson, and freshman Greg Auda. Johnson 18, began playing the clarinet when she was 10 after watching her babysitter play. She will attend Bridgewater State College this fall to become a music teacher.

"It's my life now. Recording at Carnegie Hall was amazing. It went by too fast to take it all in," Johnson said.

Auda began playing the

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music department has been deemed a GRAMMY Signature School Finalist, recorded performance samples will be judged. Each department must submit recorded excerpts from five categories including choral, string and wind/percussion programs. Noerenberg said pieces performed at Carnegie Hall and All State last year were selected for submission.

"This award is neat because it showcases the entire music system from Chandler on up. If you don't start in elementary school, then you wouldn't have a program in high school," Noerenberg said. "The students in all groups and grade levels are excited."

Two of those students are

trumpet in fifth grade.

"The school offered it and I enjoyed it," the 15-year-old said. "I am going to stick with it. Reading music is a good thing to know."

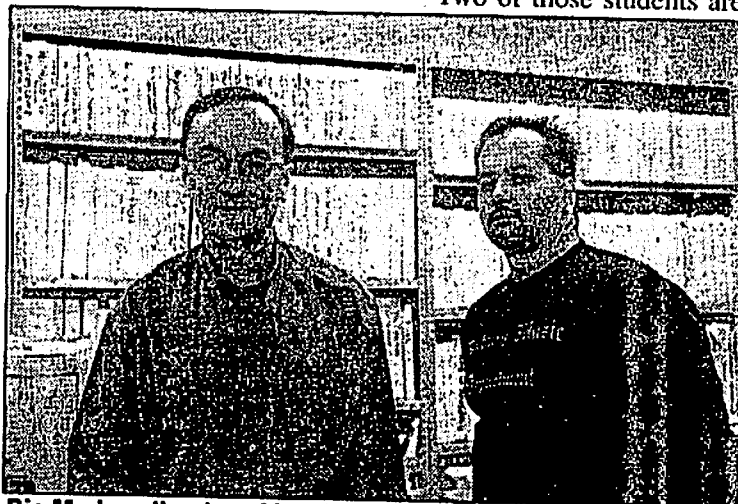
Auda plays in the jazz band and was pleased to learn that Duxbury is in the running for a national honor.

"Duxbury has a reputation for being good at instruments," Auda said.

Pondaco said once the recordings are judged, the foundation will choose the top 15 to 20 schools for "Gold" designation. Of the "Gold" schools, one will be selected as the National GRAMMY Signature School. The top school will receive \$25,000.

"When we started the music program, we were trying to get the numbers and now the program is a snowball rolling away. It's fun to see it come to this level," Madru said. "We want the high school groups to be at a high enough level for the kids who live for this, but we also want to offer groups for other students who want to play, but don't want to go professional."

The GRAMMY Foundation will select the National GRAMMY Signature School in mid-March.



Ric Madru, director of bands and music department chairman, and Joe Pondaco, music technology and band teacher, are thrilled with the music department's designation as a GRAMMY Signature School.